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Notes from Underground

Fyodor Dostoevsky

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Summary

The next day, the Underground Man is horrified by his "sentimental" behavior with Liza, and especially by the fact that he gave her his address. He is more immediately concerned, though, with how he can redeem himself in the eyes of Zverkov and Simonov. The Underground Man borrows money from Anton Antych to pay his debt to Simonov, casually explaining that he had been "carousing" with friends the night before. Then he writes a letter of apology to Simonov, carefully cultivating a "gentlemanly, good-natured" tone. The Underground Man boastfully exults in his ability to use his education and intelligence to get out of an awkward situation, and he almost convinces himself that he does indeed view the events of the night before as casually as he seems to in the letter.

The Underground Man then takes a walk in the crowded streets, but he begins to feel more and more confused and guilty. He worries that Liza will really visit him, and he fears that she will be unimpressed by his shabby apartment, his rude servant, and his own attempts at courtesy. He remembers his behavior with her as dishonorable, but then tells himself that he really did want to inspire noble thoughts in her.

After Liza does not come that evening, he spends a few days both dreading and anticipating her arrival. Certain that she will find him, the Underground Man curses her "pure heart" and "rotten sentimental soul," but he also constructs elaborate fantasies in which he saves her from prostitution, educates her, and compels her to fall in love with him. In these fantasies, he is too unselfish and refined to accept her love initially, but in the end, he invites her into his life with the

last lines of the poem quoted at the beginning of Part II: "and now, full mistress of the place, / Come bold and free into my house." These fantasies, predictably, end in self-disgust.

The Underground Man is distracted from his frustrations by the rudeness of his elderly servant, Apollon. He hates Apollon because he believes that Apollon is vain and pedantic. He feels that Apollon looks down on him, condescending to allow the Underground Man to pay him seven roubles a month to "do nothing." The Underground Man especially hates Apollon's cultivated lisp, thinking that Apollon is unjustifiably proud of his distinguished way of speaking. However, the Underground Man feels that he cannot afford to get rid of Apollon, because he imagines that it would be impossible to separate Apollon from the apartment.

Although the Underground Man concludes that he has no control over Apollon, he attempts to exert some power by intentionally withholding Apollon's wages for two weeks. He hopes to force Apollon into swallowing his pride and lowering himself to ask for his wages, rather than of proudly waiting for them to be delivered. Unfortunately, every time the Underground Man attempts this trick, Apollon's significant sighs and stares defeat him. Unable to meet Apollon's gaze, the Underground Man always caves in and gives him the money. On this occasion, however, the Underground Man explodes with intense anger after one of Apollon's long, significant looks. He threatens and insults Apollon, showing him the wage money but refusing to give it to him. Apollon threatens to go to the police.

The Underground Man decides that Liza is responsible for the problem he is having with Apollon. Just as the Underground Man is about to hit Apollon, Liza enters the room unannounced. The

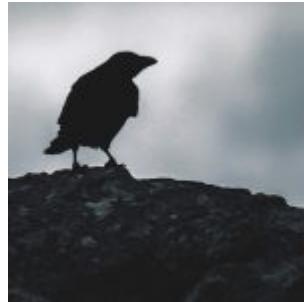
Underground Man is overcome by shame when he sees her. He flees to his bedroom until Apollon comes to tell him that "someone" has come to see him.

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The Underground Man: Character Analysis

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